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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the background study, and proposed objectives, mode of operation personnel training, staff, assessment, and facilities of a Head Start relocation service for migrant families. Included is a description of the establishment of such a relocation service which provided followup social services activities from one state to another. The proposed program utilizes a "human developer" (a paraprofessional) to work with families: (1) to initiate new services where none exist and to adapt existing services to meet migrant needs, (2) to see that comprehensive services for the whole family--adults as well as children--are provided, (3) to provide a community liaison service (for public relations, cultural interpretations), and (4) to provide for followup needs as the migrant family moves from place to place. The unique feature of this paraprofessional is that he would be drawn from a migrant background and would relocate from home base to northern work locations and then return to the home base. The potential of this type of relocating service for the migrant is evaluated, and its relation to overall Project Head Start operations is evaluated. (CS)

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Feasibility Problem

The feasibility issue here is how to provide service to a moving target. Migrant farm workers are at the bottom of the economic scale in this nation in terms of income levels of different occupational groups. Because of the low income and intermittent employment possibilities the families exist on the edge of crisis. Because of the family mobility necessitated by their occupation, they are also often strangers in a community, which makes them less likely to know how to locate resources to meet emergency needs. Because migrants go to areas with a low resident population (the need for migrants goes along with the shortage of local people to handle a seasonal peak of work) they overstrain the communities' facilities which are geared to the resident population. This means that they may be denied necessary services to meet even normal requirements, much less the special requirements posed by a family emergency. The migrant group often finds a language and cultural barrier to block communication of needs. They face a time barrier in that their entire year's earnings are dependent on working whatever days work is available to them, posing a conflict if they also need to take time off to meet some emergency, such as taking a child to a doctor; how to evaluate the needs of all the children affected by the loss of income as against the needs of the one child.

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For all of these reasons the infant and child in the migrant family is very likely to need assistance from resources outside the family. But because the family moves, follow-up may be difficult to achieve when these services are

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tied to one geographic area.

The proposed program provides a developer to work with families in securing services of whatever nature may be needed to strengthen family life. Its unique contribution is that the advocate is drawn from a migrant background and relocates from home base to northern work locations and then returns to home base.

Related Research or Practice Experience

Beginning in 1969, the national office of Head Start began attempting to find ways to provide child development services to migrating families with a relocating service. It learned from its first summer's efforts that the families scatter so much that it was not feasible to follow one group from one place to another, to another, to another. However, it also learned through subsequent years experience that by having a network of home base locations (extending several hundred miles along the Texas-Mexico border) with ten or more centers operating for migrant children, and then by moving this staff to northern locations which have a long season (in 1971 these were in nine different states) where the centers could provide services for another five or six months, that it was possible to reach many children who would be "caught" between the two nets. That is, families from Weslaco, Texas ended up in nine separate northern locations. And the reverse also worked children who first enrolled at Nyssa, Oregon ended up in six different Texas centers when families returned to home base. But is was possible to catch a sizeable percentage of children in two or more locations through this "NETWORK MODEL".

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Perhaps the most significant finding was the extremely high sense of acceptance of the center staff by the client population because they relocated just as the migrants did. Most of the staff was recruited in the home base area. Even if the staff did not go to the same work location as particular families, there was a unique feeling that this program "belonged" to the migrants. Always before the migrant was the receiver of services, but he was the one who was temporary in the community (and even home base areas tend to look upon the migrant as temporary--likely to soon be leaving and therefore passed over for job openings or services).

Staff of permanent centers which provide for migrants are usually permanent people, with their roots and many of their interests in the community. This relocating staff did not have this involvement with local community activities to the same degree, and they tended to involve themselves nearly 100% with the needs of the mobile families they served. Even in Texas, the migrants had been accustomed to arriving too late for serviced that had already filled up. With therelocation centers, the service didn't begin in Texas until the mobile families arrived, and it closed its doors and left as they did, when the spring migration began. The staff was looked upon as "us", rather than as "them". In fact the priority for employment went to migrants and as of 1971, 95% of the center employees were either migrants at the time they were hired, or were former migrants.

The experience of these centers in each community has always been one of frustration at the limited service they have been funded to provide. Head Start is by definition a service for pre-school children and the staff is justified on the basis of need to provide a reasonable ratio of staff to the number of children in care.

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However, other needs of the families were constantly coming to the attention of the center staff. As an example, in one northern community they found the families leaving many school age children to be cared for at the center. They found that the explanation for this was the growers in this area by mutual agreement paid their workers only at the end of the season (in an attempt to keep families till the end of the crop, even though earnings drop off as the crop declines later in the season). This meant that most families had no cash during their stay. They usually arrived owing money for their trip to the area, and they signed notes for everything signing notes for their housing, notes for food provided in company stores, paying for everything on credit. The schools, however, did not accept anything but cash for the mandatory $15 book fee required of any child who enrolled (for however long a period he planned to be in the school). And they required cash for lunches. The migrants did not have cash, and did not want to have the embarrassment of seeking free lunches or waiver of book fees. They therefore did not send their children to schools. The children in years prior to the Head Start center had gone to the fields, or stayed behind in the hidden cabins on back lots where migrants live. The head start director ended up spending a great deal of time trying to work out an arrangement whereby the school age children could get in school.

Another problem that came up was a rainy spell. Families had no work, needed food. There was no distribution of surplus foods because it was too far from the nearest distribution center. The head start director finally managed to get the surplus foods people to agree to let her staff and volunteer parents load and bring in a truck full of food and they also handled its distribution and the paper work.

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Families in this area found they could not get emergency medical treatment because doctors feared they would be left with unpaid bills and the families could not pay cash. Several people on the head start staff ended up counter signing on notes so that families could take care of serious medical emergencies.

At the same time all of this type of outreach was going on, the staff was trying to take care of approximately 70 children (they were staffed for 45) and they kept the center open sometimes for as long as fifteen hours a day, to match the hours of field work. They did not have energy or staff free to be providing this type of extra service--yet they did it. The services they gave were acceptable to the families because the staff represented the same cultural family--to accept help from your own is sharing. This is not the same thing as having to seek help from "others".

This description will indicate the unique potential of this relocating child service to provide a vehicle for an advocacy service. What would be added, in this case, would be staff people over and above the center staff, who are already overburdened with providing the services for which they were funded, to perform precisely this expanded service to families. The para-professional developer would answer to the other needs of families, located initially through their contact with the interstate head start program. His job would be to contact community services and overcome whatever obstacles might stand between the family needs and use of these services. In many cases the nearest doctor to one of these centers is more than sixty miles away. A great many northern states lack bilingual professional staff--no doctors or lawyers who can speak Spanish. The developer could respond to special types

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of family emergencies. An instance which comes to mind involve death in a family resulting from a car accident, leaving a non English speaking wife and children both destitute and completely bewildered with coping with the problem of handling burial and a return to someplace where they had relatives to assist them. Another case involved imprisonment of the head of the family--again leaving the wife and children who did not speak English totally unable to cope. These types of emergencies hover over the families of migrant farm workers. Too often the need remains unknown to a strictly local service which is geared to a local population. In the case of the relocating program it has resources in other states and has a unique capability for providing follow-up from one state to another.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal is to establish for migratory Mexican-American parents a developmental relationship between them and:

a) their children - The aim here is to encourage more participation and involvement by parents in the activities of the community and institutions which affects the child's life. As the growing child sees his parents participating and involving themselves in these activities he will develop a natural parent-child relationship which will grow with him.

b) other members of their ethnic community (anglo) - The aim here is to make the local community (both home base and on the migrant stream) aware that migrants live in the community. The developmental relationship is to make the community (particularly local government) conscious of the particular needs of migrants in future community planning.

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c) Individuals and institutions of the ethnic majority- The aim here is to make relevant changes in attitudes and delivering of services to migrant children by schools, federal programs, or other institutions involved with migrants. This would mean talking to superintendents of schools and the school board, program administrators, clergy, etc. to establish an understanding of the complexity of migrant life. Through this, better program planning and better implementation of services will result.

The objectives will be:

1. Initiation of new services needed by migrants where none exist, or obtaining an adaptation of existing services where they fail to adequately meet the need

a. By assessing the particular needs of the migrants, the human developers will establish what services are needed.

b. Where services are non-existant the human developer will approach the agency or institution to get the needed services. For example, if there is a great need for health services the human developer will approach all available health resources to alleviate the need.

c. If existing services are not relevant to the migrant, the human developer will work with these service agencies to make adaptations to better serve the migrant.

2. Providing services that meet the needs of more than one family member--in place of the fractured services now brought about by funding channels which give schools money to run programs for school age children only, pre-school centers, money for pre-school children only, health services if there is a local health agency willing to sponsor, adult services through

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other sources, etc. Very seldom are these services all brought together to meet the comprehensive needs of families, especially the migrant family which usually overburdens communities he visits, and who can be overlooked because his is only a seasonal need when seen through the eyes of the local population.

a. The human developers will contact and evaluate all existing service agencies in the area. From their evaluation, they will determine what services they have to offer.

b. After all the service agencies have been contacted and evaluated, the human developers will bring all the services together to form a coalition of all the services. The human developers will act as middlemen between the service agencies and the migrants to bring both of them together.

3. Providing a community liaison service--public relations, interpretation of the cultural group

a. The human developers will promote an awareness of migrants to the overall community.

b. They will also provide sensitivity to the various agencies or institutions of the cultural and ethnic background of migrants.

4. Providing a vehicle for follow up of the needs of a mobile family as they move from one locality to another

a. The human developers will establish a working relationship with other migrant programs throughout the user states. This working relationship will be one of coordination to organize a referral system.

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b. The referral system will be made to follow the migrants from state to state. This referral system will contain the health needs as well as the personal family needs, food stamps, transportation, day care, etc.

MODE OF OPERATION

A staff of 14 is envisioned. They would share office space with the centers operated by the Interstate Head Start Program. Their assignment would go beyond the clientele of the head start program to include families from nearby communities. These communities lack child development centers and also have a great need of the type of referral and family counseling that the worker could provide.

Referral of families would also come to this assigned worker from the National Migrant Information Exchange System. All programs operated through the National Head Start desk obtain information on the home-base of families they reach. This can be forwarded to home base areas for further contact. The interstate program is already providing "locater information" on every family served in one of its centers in the North when they gave a home base address served by a home base center. However, this would add locator information from many other, unrelated centers now runned by stationary grantees who do not have a home base linkage to provide follow up.

The human developers would work in the following manner:

1. Their work would initiate with locating all available resources with regard to programs, agencies, or institutions which affect the migrants. They will make contact wich these programs to find out what services they offer and how they reach and work with the migrant community.

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2. The next step will be to contact the migrant families. This will be an initial visitation to develop a working relationship and also to make an assessment of needs and to pinpoint specific problem areas.

3. After an assessment of needs has been made, the human developer will start playing his role as a middleman between the available resources and the migrants. It is at this point that he will also try to initiate services where none exist or bring the agencies together to provide better services.

4. During this time the human developer will be promoting sensitivity and awareness of the migrant's situation to the community.

5. By working with the various agencies, the human developers will gather as much information as possible on the migrant families. This information will be used to set up a referral system with other migrant programs in the user states.

The human developers will relocate to the user states. While on the migrant stream they will make certain adaptations to the operation of the project. The adaptations will be to the following situations:

1. The migrants are now living in labor camps. All the labor camps in the area have to be located.

2. Most of the migrant families work from sunup to sundown. An appropriate time for home visitations has to be developed.

3. Many families are with a crew leader and do not have personal transportation to get to some of the programs.

Training

The primary responsibility for training of the human developers will be on the Project Director, David Ojeda, Jr., the Executive Director of TMC,

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Oscar L. Villarreal, and the Deputy Director of TMC, Onesimo Castillo. These persons have been working with migrants both on the home base and on the migrant stream for serveral years. They will rely on help from other key staff members of TMC who have had much valuable experience in working with migrants. The contributions of these TMC personnel will weigh greatly in the training since they are very familiar with the areas where the human developers will work. These includes the migrant stream as well as the home base areas. Also the resources and key contacts which have already been established by TMC will be passed on to the human developers.

The training will be geared to provide for the human developers the necessary information and instruments to carry out the objectives which have been set up for the program. The training will include the following areas:

a. An overlook at some of the programs and agencies which affect migrants (food stamps, health clinics, welfare dept., etc.).

b. Utilization of available resources.

c. Research and interviewing techniques.

d. Documentation of data and use of instruments.

e. Sensitivity to migrant situation.

f. Purpose of the project - projected goals - changes sought

Assessment

The assessment of this project will have these main elements:

1. The intake data on families would provide a profile of the migrant population served; and the service contact record will yield information on the reality of the need for multiple services to a single

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family to replace the fractured services now brought about by single purpose funding.

2. The work done to inform and sensitize the local communities on the migrants will be a means by which to record change. The change sought will be on the attitudes and understanding of the migrant situation. This would provide the means of establishing a record on what means were effective in producing community change, i.e. adapting a service formerly failing to reach migrants, producing a service not provided before; significant indications of a more receptive community.

3. The in-depth family interview of a sample of the client population would provide information on a) the ideas of the migrant families as to the most important qualities they want their children to have b) their feelings about the hope the child may have to achieving his goals, and c) the hope that the parent may have of being able to provide guidance and other assistance the child may need as a growing person. To the extent that the family interview when retaken at a later date, shows a change particularly in the family's sense of being able to provide their child with the guidance and support he needs to develop will be a measure of the effectiveness of this program.

Project Staff

The Director of this program will be David Ojeda, Jr. who is presently employed with TMC as Planner. He has previously worked with UMOI (United Migrants for Opportunity, Inc.) as a Center Director and with the Colorado Migrant Council as an Itinerant Tutor. Other related experience is a Ford

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Foundation Fellowship where he worked with I.R.A. (Interstate Research Associated) and with SWCLR (Southwest Council of La Raza) both in Washington, D. C. and with MAUC (Mexican-American Unity Council) in San Antonio.

The employees of this program will be migrants or be familiar or have a complete understanding of migrant life and all its problems. Due to need for good data collection and complexity of the situation some college training will be sought but not required. All will have to be bilingual and bicultural as the families they serve.

The main duties of thehuman developers will be to contact migrant families to learn of their needs and to assist them in obtaining services affecting their children. Their duties will extend to the communities in making sure that communication on the project and its goals are made known to local agencies interested or are in a position to be of assistance to migrant families. Also they will work with any other local agencies sharing a responsibility for the poverty population migrant and non-migrant.

Doing this type of information exchange systemically has not been possible for the head start center staffs because of their work load, so it is possible that they may have missed obtaining assistance available to them for want of seeking it out. By communication within the project between states, the duties of the coordinator would be to obtain follow-up services for families who move to a new location.

Facilities

To conserve expenses, inmost cases the human developers would be housed at the centers operated by the Interstate Head Start project. If the project

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lacks office space or if a more convenient location to the homes of the bulk of families to be served is required by a temporary office space will be obtained in any type of building available.

The exchange of information will be serviced by the Interstate Head Start Program which has office staff geared to this aspect of program need. Administration and training of staff will come from the cooperating Interstate Head Start Program.